P152

"The Preaching of the Cross."

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SYNOD OF HAMILTON AND LONDON,

AT THE MEETING HELD IN INGERSOLL, APRIL 10TH, 1882.

BY THE

REV. JOHN THOMPSON,

Of Sarnia, Retiring Moderator.

SARNIA:

THE AMATEUR JOB PRESS.

1882.

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THE following Discourse was not prepared with any view to publication; but yielding to the requests of many of my brethren who heard it, and who expressed the conviction that it contained truths, important alike to Pastor and people, I give it to the press just as it was prepared. For lack of time, parts VI. and VIII. were not spoken, but are here printed so as to give the whole text of the discourse.

The Sermon was intended for Ministers, and emphasizes one part of their work—PREACHING. But as we have no official secrets, it is hoped that, from from its perusal, our people may see their duty more clearly, in the reflected light of our own.

J. THOMPSON.

Sarnia, June, 1882.

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The Preaching of the Cross.

"The Preaching of the Cross."—1 Cor. i., 18.
"We preach * * * Christ Jesus the Lord."—2 Cor. iv. 5.
"They ceased not to teach and preach Christ Jesus."—Acts v., 42.

PAUL acted as a man who had a purpose in life. As an ambassador from the Court of Heaven, bearing a message of reconciliation, he had been commissioned to do a great and important work. He was sent as an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest "*the Cross of Christ*" be made of none effect. The Cross of Christ must not be hidden with wreaths of mere human decoration, nor concealed by the wordy utterances of oratory. Christ Jesus the Lord must be held up before the faith of men, that "whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Paul had not come to Corinth to make fine speeches, or give eloquent orations. You could never suppose such a one letting himself down to the popular taste, seeking to satisfy those itching ears ever eager to hear some new thing.

He came to preach the Gospel with the demonstration of the Spirit, determined rather to speak five words with the understanding, than five thousand in an unknown tongue; and all true preaching consists in making disclosures of Christ's unsearchable riches, and pointing sinners to One in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.

I.—The Minister's Distinctive Work—Preaching.

The PREACHING of the Cross—"We *preach* Christ Jesus the Lord."

The Ministry exists for the grand and blessed functions which it has to exercise, the noble and gracious ends which

it has to serve. Men are called to the *work* of the Ministry, while the Scriptures emphasize preaching as the Minister's highest act, and demand that he focus his whole strength upon the pulpit as the work of the ministry by way of paramount importance. The Church's Head sent forth his servants with the commission of the Gospel's universal diffusion, "Go ye into all the world, and *preach* the Gospel to every creature." He sent out his disciples two by two, and said, "As ye go, *preach*." And in fulfilment of this commission they went forth from the presence of their Master preaching the word everywhere, the Spirit confirming their work with signs following. Necessity was laid upon them: "Woe is me," said Paul, "if I preach not the Gospel."

Christ's servants must not be ashamed of being called *preachers;* it designates their special and peculiar work more fitly than any other title. It marks the grand radical duty and distinguishing work of the Christian Church, which must occupy the chief place till the world be evangelized, and the Church clothed in her garments of salvation; for it has pleased God, through the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. From the days of Noah till our own, "*Preachers of righteousness*" has been a noble title, and you, as the servants of the Most High, must not perform your duty so perfunctorily as to permit people to forget that you are by commission and profession preachers of the Word.

II.—The Substance of Preaching—"The Cross."

"We Preach Christ Jesus the Lord."

As the mathematician loves to get a simple formula to express complicated results, so Paul packs all the fullness and glory of the Gospel into one expression, "*The preaching of the Cross*"—"*Christ and Him crucified.*"

As Ministers you have been put in trust with the Gospel, and the subject of all evangelical preaching is "*The glorious Gospel of the blessed God.*" The ministry of reconciliation has been committed to you, and on the grounds of Christ's com-

pleted work, the burden of your message is, "*Repent and believe the Gospel: Be ye reconciled to God.*"

Our choice of subjects, therefore, is not discretionary; Christ says, "*Teach and preach whatsoever I have commanded you.*" This binds us to our instructions, and rules out of Court many fanciful and ingenious subjects which have found their way into the modern pulpit; and confines the ministry to the strict terms of its commission. As a standing ministry is one of Christ's gifts to his Church, so the work of the ministry has been divinely determined; we are messengers with a specific message, ambassadors with definite instructions to execute lofty and commanding, though limited functions.

To be given to ingenious speculations, starting novel theories, or setting afloat nebulous fancies, may cater to the curiosity and foolish wonder of the restless multitude; but it is no proof of mental activity or special culture; it merely proves the minister to be dealing falsely with his holy trust. To leave the glories of the everlasting hills of Divine Revelation, and descend to the low plane of literary, scientific, or political discussions in the pulpit, is, for the minister, to be shorn of his strength, and to become weak as another man! There is an easy way of making a little cheap capital just now, by pretending to range over a vast and varied field, and discuss a variety of subjects, converting the pulpit into a sort of lecturing *bureau*. To substitute such themes for the grand doctrines of *sin* and *grace*, may please the *arabs*, the wandering gipsies who prowl among our congregations, but the attractions of the Cross are alone legitimate to win men. Our theme is the blood which cleanseth from all sin. The range of our preaching is the Word of God, which is the record of his mighty acts, the covenant of his peace which can never be broken,—"*The old story of Jesus and his love.*"

At the present time there is a great cry against *narrowness;* the demand is for breadth and expansiveness; to float with the current of the age. And pulpit teaching, amid such a multiplicity of subjects as engross men's minds, may

become very broad and diffuse, and cover much ground; but there is danger of its becoming correspondingly thin and shallow; gaining in breadth at the expense of depth and volume; running over many subjects, but going to the heart of nothing. Much that goes by the name of religious teaching has become as thin as a film of cloud, as airy and uncertain as the morning mist compared to the Alpine peak of Geneva; while the doctrines of grace which we are commanded to preach, stand more firmly through the shifting ages of human opinion, than the Alps settled on their granite foundations. The mountains are growing old and crumbling away, but the Word of God liveth and abideth forever. And this Word is the sole fountain-head of all instruction and authority, bringing permanent blessing to the hearts and homes of men, as the perpetual light of a sun that shall no more go down. The Gospel is ever laden with mercy, whose glad tidings of great joy are as water to the thirsty soul; as fresh and sparkling to the weary and heavy laden as when it first sprang from the fountain of inspiration, when "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

"The temptations are many in the present age, to multiply topics and introduce themes into the pulpit, upon which Christ and his Apostles never preached. It is enough that the disciple be as his master. And if the Son of God, possessing an infinite intelligence, and capable of comprehending in his intuition, the whole abyss of truth, physical and moral, natural religion and revealed, all art, all science, all beauty, and all grandeur,—if the Son of God, the Omniscient One, was nevertheless reticent regarding the vast universe of truth that lay outside of the Christian scheme, and confined himself to that range of ideas which relate to sin and redemption,—then who are we that we should venture beyond the limits, and counteract his example."—*Shedd's Homiletics*, p. 218.

And great definiteness is needed. From his study of the Scriptures, "*The man of God*" must be thoroughly furnished, and speak as one who has a definite belief, and whose convic-

tions rule him. To hesitate as to the nature of his message, to be in a state of mental suspense as to whether there are any settled truths, indicates a state of mind which unfits any one to appear as a preacher of righteousness, presuming to declare the whole counsel of God. An ambassador must know the nature of his commission, or he has no right to assume the office. The Bible has been too long before the world as a subject of earnest study, to furnish any excuse for unsettled opinions on fundamental doctrines. You are the official expounders of a Divine Revelation that gives utterance to the will and purposes of God. The Bible is God's articulate voice to man on the most momentous of all subjects, and you must preach the doctrines just as you find them, for who dare change the substance of the Divine message! Our doctrines are the spoken verities of God, and not the passing sentiments of men, which are in a state of perpetual flux. In each succeeding generation the pulpit must point sinners to the Lamb as the great atonement offered up once for all, and tell men that if they will open their hearts to the Saviour, He will fill them with the fullness of God.

A preacher of the everlasting Gospel must not produce themes, however interesting and eloquent, where Bible truth is not the staple. The criticism of a certain professor on a student's trial discourse, applies to many sermons preached in our day: "Sir, any educated heathen might have preached that sermon." Flavel was right when he affirmed that "the excellency of a sermon lay in the plainest discoveries and loviest application of Jesus Christ." And no minister will ever be successful who does not follow Apostolic example, and reason out of the Scriptures.

Amateurs in Science and Literature, the *dilettante* of rose-water culture; magazine-writers of a few months standing,—our self-constituted oracles of wisdom,—may wander over the unbounded fields of imagination, pleasing themselves with their own fancies; they are entitled to pull a flower wherever it may seem to grow. But it must remain the grand distinct-

ive work of Christ's ministers to preach the everlasting Gospel of his grace, and direct the weary pilgrim on the road that leads through the gate into the city. If our ministrations are to comfort men, they must point to the God of all comfort who sends his Spirit to assure our heart. If they are to enlighten men, they must reveal Him who is the light of the world, and bring Him near to those who are in the shadow of death. It must, in short, be the preaching of the Cross, where grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. And in that grand theme of the ages lie the Church's work, and power, and glory, and all the weapons of her future conquests.

III.—You must Preach both Law and Gospel.

These two themes must run parallel. There is a demand made on the pulpit of to-day, to speak only smooth things and prophesy peace. Preaching must not hurt men's sensibilities or disturb their worldly comfort, by speaking much of the judgments of God. Man's guilt and depravity, his sin and misery, and God's wrath against transgression, are not welcome themes, and the pulpit dwells on them too seldom; and the demand for smooth things is yielded to in numberless instances; hence you hear scores of sermons, from none of which could you learn that man is guilty, and under the just judgments of God.

There are many subjects of profound interest to the human intellect which the preacher may be tempted to discuss. He could easily speak of verdant fields, and blooming flowers, and murmuring brooks, and sunny skies, and fleecy clouds, and summer dells, where beauty lies cradled in the lap of grandeur, and all the nice little sentiment and poetry of the nineteenth century. It would be very easy to omit all reference to punishment as the doom of sin, and substitute themes very attractive and captivating to the natural man. There is much preaching that dishonors the blessed Redeemer and virtually proclaims that Christ has died in vain, and made an unnecessary sacrifice when he poured out his soul unto death. We

hear a great deal about manhood and its various developments; of the proud march of intellect; the refinements of the age; the grandeur of human life; and the achievements of the race; and we come away so well satisfied with ourselves, that we begin to patronize the Gospel as something that after all deserves recognition. But we hear too little of the fearful pit and the miry clay in which the sinner is sunk, and of that Sovereign hand of mercy and power reached down to lay hold of him and lift him out.

But while speaking of man's misery, never forget to proclaim his *guilt* as the cause of it. He is not simply unfortunate, but a *rebel* against Divine authority, and lying under the curse of a law which he has broken. No man can have any true appreciation of his condition and danger, or any adequate knowledge of what redemption is, till he feels his guilt. No man can put its true value on the Gospel, till he knows it to be deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Scriptural views of man's guilt and depravity are the necessary conditions of understanding the Divine message, either in the awful solemnity of its warnings and Divine sanctions, or in the richness and sweetness of its promises.

We follow the Master's own example when we place the *disease* and the *physician;* the *wound* and the *balm;* the *ruin* and *redemption;* the *law* and the *Gospel,* side by side, that men may be at once warned to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. We must preach God's law which man has violated, and under whose curse he now lies. There must be no letting down of its tremendous sanctions, and no concealing of that condition in which the impenitent remain. A broken law, with the solemn judgments of an offended God above it, is the black back-ground of dark condemnation, in front of which the calm light of the Gospel shines all the more lovely; while its exceeding great and precious promises burst forth as the morning radiance, to woo and win us to the side of Jesus. You must call your people

to look to Mount Sinai, all sheeted in fire and smoke, as well as to Mount Olivet, bathed in the beauty and sweetness of the Gospel. Men must have sense of the curse with which the Old Testament closes, to appreciate the rich fullness with which the New Testament opens. What a solemn close to the old record—"I will come and smite the earth with a curse"! And what a rich opening to the new—"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ"! The pulpit must never hesitate to tell men of *a wrath to come*, all the more terrible that it is the wrath of the Lamb; wrath in the face of the holy, merciful, loving Saviour. It is when ministers themselves know the *terrors* of the Lord that they become urgent in persuading men. It is when convinced of the terribleness of that sentence of expulsion, and the endless misery of the finally apostate, that makes the heart brood and yearn over men while urging them to flee from the wrath to come. Preach the *law*, then, as the ground work of all that gives a preciousness and value to every Gospel promise, and a solemn significance to every invitation and warning. There is as much need to-day of preaching of *a judgment to come*, as when Paul preached it before Felix. Never hesitate to proclaim what the Bible says on these momentous subjects.

Don't overlook the *law*, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." It is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. And yet it was unto the Gospel of Christ that Paul was separated. *Shiloh* is the great attraction; "Unto Him must the gathering of the people be." Hold up the Cross; there we see love and righteousness blended; mercy and truth embracing each other; the rainbow glories of the Divine attributes encircled and blending in Divine proportions. Don't speak of a love that ignores righteousness; never put asunder what God has joined. It is a love that does not overlook sin, but punished it in the person of his own Son. And it is a righteousness that does not clothe itself in the garments of terror, but shows the justice of God while justifying the ungodly who believe on Jesus; and you must preach both, while declaring the whole counsel of God.

But O, let all this be done with tenderness, and tears such as Jesus himself shed, and not with flippant lip and unholy anger. Many preach the law with a harshness that hardens, as if they held the thunderbolts of Jehovah in their own hands. Let the terrors of the Lord make their first impression on your own heart, and this will make you tender and loving while pleading with others, and let that pleading be largely by the mercies and gentleness of Jesus Christ. When I have heard the judgments of God denounced against sinners, by a superficial, frivolous, worldly-minded preacher of uncertain moral tendencies himself, it scorched and blasted like the breath of some unholy fire. And I have thought by way of contrast, of the Saviour weeping over Jerusalem as if his very heart was bleeding itself away in sad regret as he was forced to pronounce judgment upon her: "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets and them that were sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not." Dwell on these themes with great tenderness and pity, and follow the ministry of the Master himself who shed tears over the sins and sorrows of men. You must imbibe more deeply the spirit of Jesus if you would presume to preach the Gospel of His love, for love suffereth long and is kind.

"Look at the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. There are many accounts to be given of His wonderful work. People may say many ingenious things about it, and many of them are true. But we are sure that he puts his hand most certainly on the central power of Christ's ministry who holds up before us the intense value which the Saviour always set upon the souls for which he lived and died. It shines in everything he says and does. It looks out from his eyes when they are happiest and when they are saddest. It trembles in the most loving consolations, and trembles in the most passionate rebukes which come from his lips. It is the inspiration of His pity and His indignation."—*Brooks.*

Lack of sympathy is a lack of power. Some men are like an iceberg, a frosty atmosphere surrounds them which nips every tender bud as a June frost; others are genial as the sunshine of a summer day. Have more sympathy with men in all the pressing urgencies of their lot, and bend yourself down to their necessities, and, like the Master, lay the warm human hand on their heart. "*Truthing it in love,*" is the expressive formula; you can touch every side of the human heart with this. Love, like a key, can open every shut door, and give you access. Like the great exemplar, you must be touched with the feeling of your people's infirmities, and then you can no more help sympathizing with them than a bird can help singing when the song is in its breast; even your severities toward them must be begotten of the love you cherish toward your people.

IV.—The True Scope of Preaching.

The great and only remedy is to hold up the Cross of Christ clear and full in view of perishing men that they may look on that Lamb of God and have their sins taken away. And in that grand theme of salvation through the blood of Christ all teaching and preaching is to have its full scope, while in the proclamation of the riches of His grace the most brilliant genius, the richest culture, the ripest scholarship may be employed, for even angels desire to look into these things.

It is admitted by all that the doctrines of the Cross are the pulpit's great theme, the grand subject which the Christian ministry must handle. But what is meant by *preaching Christ?* What do the doctrines of the Cross embrace? What did Paul regard as the scope of his preaching when he said, "I am determined not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." "*Christ and Him crucified*" has become a cant phrase with many who would narrow its blessed significancy to their own conceptions of what are the only legitimate themes for the Christian pulpit. Many small men, through their professed zeal for the Gospel would curb

the ministry in its legitimate work, and put bonds upon the liberty of the sons of God, squeezing everything into their own little mould. Did Paul mean that he would utter the same truth day by day like a parrot cry, or use the Gospel as a wonder worker uses his charm-book or mystic symbol? No, the *Cross* was to be the centre and vital principle throughout his whole ministry, and that from it all moral duty must draw its sanctions. It was to be the *focus* from which all lines of instruction were to proceed. But Paul claimed and exercised the liberty of discussing and enforcing every duty between man and man. There is not one of the minor morals that does not receive notice from the Apostle, as may be learned from any of his epistles. He says, "*We preach Christ crucified*," but in that very letter in which this statement occurs he discusses the question of marriage in times of danger; the inexpediency of eating meat sacrificed to idols; going to law before heathen judges; contributions to the saints; divisions in the Church; how to conduct public worship. In short, he brings the principles of the Gospel to bear on all life and conduct. Paul regarded nothing foreign to the pulpit which affects man in his life here or hereafter. He preached *Christ Jesus the Lord*, but he included in this, telling husbands how to love their wives, and wives to care for, and obey their husbands. He enjoined on children obedience to their parents, and parents how to train their children. He brings masters and servants face to face, and makes each feel his own responsibility. He did not regard it as outside of his ministry to tell young women how to dress and wear their hair. He warns against pride and foolish display, and gives counsels to Timothy concerning his health. He descends on particulars, and specifies sins one by one, and on duties till the long catalogue is drawn out. (Eph. iv., 31, 32.) When ministers become thus specific on moral duties now, a class of hearers of the weaker sort charge them with preaching *Works* instead of the Gospel, and speak by way of reproach of a *mere moral discourse*. But ministers, like the apostle James, must preach

Works as well as *Faith*—Works as the fruits and evidences of Faith, the outcome of a loving heart. "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew you my faith by my works."

Preaching Christ must not be understood in a narrow sense. It gives the whole range of the Bible as the source of our teaching, which bears on Christ as its substance. What a richness Paul found in the Old Testament as may be seen in his Epistle to the Hebrews; and could not Christ himself begin at Moses and all the Prophets, and expound unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself? To preach Christ is to open up the whole revelation of God, for He is the reality of all its types. To Him gave all the prophets witness, and Moses wrote of Him. See what treasures Spurgeon has found in the Psalms, which cover the varied experiences of the heart under every spiritual condition; or Pusey, in Daniel; or Alexander, in Isaiah; or Robinson, in Genesis; or Arnot, in the Proverbs; or Guthrie, in Ezekiel! Christ is the grand centre of the circle of Christian truth; but that circle is wide, and touches at many seemingly opposite points. He is the Sun around which all revolve, while the moralities of life spring from the union of Christ with his people; therefore doctrine and duty, morality and religion, are married, and must never be divorced. If the Apostle James were to preach from some of our pulpits his matchless Epistle, some people would call it cold morality and not the gospel. And the late James Hamilton was wont to say that some would charge our Lord's sermon on the mount as lacking in evangelical truth if they were to hear it preached! All this arises from a mistaken view of what preaching Christ means. Surely Christ's authority requires us not only to *believe*, but also to be truthful, honest, diligent, temperate, good husbands, wives, dutiful children and worthy citizens. We have no more right to conceal the will of God concerning *duty* than the same will concerning *doctrine*. Because of false sentiments on this whole

subject there are many who would make poor pagans who pass for very good Christians. Don't imagine that the work of the Christian ministry is circumscribed because it consists in preaching Christ; no work is circumscribed that has all the fullness of God to draw from. There is no atmosphere so free as that which overhangs the Christian pulpit; no range of subjects so wide, so rich, so varied as that which the Minister handles.

Many regard the preaching of the Cross as a mere discussion of abstract principles, the elucidation of theological dogma, the unburying of old fossils of a past age, mere speculative opinions of religious thought, with no direct bearing on any human interest, real or supposed. But it is to bring the Gospel to bear on man in all the trying circumstances and experiences of everyday life; guiding the erring, directing the anxious, comforting the sorrowing, speaking rich, warm words to thaw out the winter from many a frozen heart, and preparing the soil for seed-sowing, preaching glad tidings, and bringing summer and sunshine into many a home long darkened. Surely this is employment fit for angels, and yet it is man who is called to be a co-worker with Christ in reclaiming a lost world. The preaching of the Cross is the lifting up of the Son of Man as the slain Lamb of God's providing, through whose blood redemption is granted. It proclaims him a physician for the world's malady, a balm for its wound, a shelter from its storms, a great light in this world's darkness. It is to proclaim Jesus as the only Mediator,—the way, the truth, the life. It sets him forth as a Prince and a Saviour, and points the weary and heavy laden to him for rest.

We preach Christ crucified, we glory in the Cross! But who is Christ? He is the eternal Son of God, Jehovah-Jesus, the Saviour of the world; the brightness of the Father's glory; the King and Head of the Church. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, whose rule covers all human interests, and whose authority touches all human duty. When his kingdom comes, his influence must sanctify and ennoble all acti-

vities, and cover with the sacredness of his presence wherever men live, and toil, and suffer, and die. Could we but make men feel and acknowledge his authority as Lord of the conscience, and his sacredness as priest, and bow in loving obedience to his righteous law, we would then have gained all for which the ministry exists; for our aim is to have Christ acknowledged as ruler of the life.

We believe in special appliances to meet special forms of sin that are developing. We believe in restrictive legislation and prohibitory enactments when these are expedient. Public profanity ought to be punished as a public crime. Our laws ought to be enforced against Sabbath-breaking. It is right to punish theft, murder, adultery. Each man as a citizen has liberty to exercise his own civil rights, and engage in public and political movements according to his own conscience. But the Church of Christ as such—Ministers of the Gospel—must wield another weapon, and fight with the sword of the Spirit. They must put on the breast-plate of righteousness, and the shield of faith. This is our only true armoury with which to quench all the fiery darts of the devil. The Apostles and early preachers of the Word looked over as much sin, and had to meet as many vices as we,—drunkenness, licentiousness, crimes of all kinds. But we never find them agitating for legal enactments. They never came to knock at Cæsar's door, or depend on legal prohibition measures of any kind, but always on the baptism of the Spirit; the endowment with power from on High; and with this equipment they went forth as strong men to conquer in the name of the Lord, and were enabled to turn the world upside down, for the Cross which they preached was the power of God for the pulling down of Satan's strongholds. And the Gospel of Jesus is still the only legitimate means for the ministry, with which to meet and subdue the sins and vices of our day. Hence—

V.—This preaching of the Cross is practical for the present age, and for all ages.

A common cry just now is, "Let the pulpit be more alive to the issues of our day, and let ministers preach more in the plane of present necessities, and meet with a ready answer the urgent questions which weary, burdened men are ever asking." And when we look over any section of society, and witness the toil, and strife, and danger, and know that there are so many unuttered distresses, so many concealed burdens, untold secret woes, long histories of hidden suffering in silent anguish—guilt, crime, self-condemnation, even self-loathing, —what more timely than a wholesome answer given to the world's cry of distress! But from whom can this answer come? Shall we not bring it from our loving Father to his distressed children, and tell them how God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and how he would have all men come to a knowledge of the truth? Shall we not bring the answer from Jesus, who calls, "Come unto me all ye that labour. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink"? In short, we preach the Cross as the only answer which God has given to the most urgent question a human soul can ask, "What must I do to be saved?"

"Let ministers be more practical," it is said. "Let them come nearer to the people, and speak so that every one may hear in his own tongue the wonderful works of God"! We echo this with all our heart. Let men be plain, simple, clear, earnest in all their utterances concerning Jesus as the only Saviour, while pressing his claims. They must hold him up so that none may be seen but Jesus only. The preaching of the Cross must come to the world like the breath of Spring, with shower and sunshine, to melt away the ice of ages, that the living waters may flow on amid the richness and glory of summer life, with hills rejoicing on every side.

"Don't preach doctrine," it is urged; "but discuss live issues; denounce public sins and political corruption; warn the erring, and tell men about the right use of wealth; the

sins of indulgence; point out cases of criminal luxury; inculcate industry, veracity, honesty, fair dealing between man and man." All this is most necessary. No pulpit can afford to divorce itself from the great questions of the age, or hold itself aloof from the seething masses of men, who live, and sin, and suffer. No Christian teaching can ignore the fear and excitement, the anxious inquiries, or urgent considerations that press hard upon all men who are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. No pulpit has a right to live, that refuses to fit into the necessities of the day, and meet men just where they are, and supply their conscious wants.

But to do this is not to turn away from the preaching of the Cross. It is taking that one great, universal message of Christ, in all the manifoldness of its power and blessing, and bringing it near to men in all the fullness of its Divine bounty. And as the same sun that shines round and round this great globe, and pours its light and glory over the cedars of Lebanon and on the sloping sides of the Alps and the Andes, shines also on the little moss and modest shrinking flower, and gives its distinctive shape and colouring to each thing that grows—as all forms of life in their endless profusion, and shades of colouring, all trees, plants, shrubs, flowers, draw what they need from one fountain of supply; as the same sunlight builds up the oak and pours its glory into the little flowers that carpet the fields, giving all that is distinctive through the endless variety of being,—so does the love of God, that [illegible] men, and beautifies the Church of the the Redeemer, the Sun of Righteousness,—shed its beams on high and low. This one message of mercy and grace from the pierced heart of Jehovah-Jesus, is Divinely adapted to all men in their varied circumstances and relations, suited for all men, in the manifoldness of life, whether under the pressure of either duty or danger.

When we study the moral condition of society, and see all manner of evil practices, drunkenness, dishonesty, Sabbath-breaking, profanity, worldliness, foolishness, pride, en-

evil speaking, variance, discord, malice, vulgar ostentation, laziness, gossip, (what a terrible list our vices make!) how are we to act, or what can be done to stem the turgid torrent, or root out all these vices? Are we to erect separate batteries, use different appliances, and thus divide our forces? As ministers of the Gospel, and as Christian men and women, bent on practical purposes, what must we do? What can be done? We believe there is only one effective remedy for the evils of the world! All these separate streams of iniquity flow from one fountain. The deadly upas tree has but one real root. The radical evil does not lie in these separate forms of sin, but in the one common source—a sinful heart, from which Christ has been excluded; a heart estranged from God and far from righteousness. And to that evil heart of unbelief we must apply the only remedy known to the Church of God, and in the name of Jesus we demand that it be cleansed in his blood; and when the fountain has been made pure, so will be the streams that issue from it. Take away the stony heart, and let a heart of flesh be given, and the whole will be changed. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and Christ gets the supreme place of honour and authority, all things will then become new. Therefore we preach the Cross as the power of God to conquer and subdue man and make him obedient to the faith. We bring Christ near, that men may recognize his authority, and that Cross, like the sun-light, will never be superseded, for it is God's message to all the ages.

Since the only weapons known to the Church of Christ are the spiritual truths of the Gospel, we must rebuke all forms of sin, in the name of that righteous Lord that loveth righteousness, and bring no motive to bear on the daily life and conduct, that does not draw its sanctions from Calvary. We take all outward acts as evidences of the inner life, and when we rebuke drunkenness, dishonesty, evil-speaking, envy, pride, etc., it must be done in the interests of the heart, and through the Cross of Christ, which is the power of God to change it. It is lost labour making the outside of the platter

clean, and not to cleanse the inside. Christ must rule the heart, and we make a protest against sin and vice in the interests of his eternal kingdom. We must cut away the root, and not spend our time in lopping off branches only, to spread out more thickly than ever. Much is said to-day about *moral reform:* the radical reform is a new heart. It is nothing short of Christ's saving power that must reach where men are living in sin, to bring them into the way of godliness. It is the abundance of his grace that must go where the abundance of sin has gone before it. It is the blood of Christ that must be applied to human guilt. It is the Cross of Christ that is the only citadel of safety to the Church of God. Therefore the best way to deal with all forms of sin and vice, and to meet the fresh needs of our day, even in the interests of morality, is to give a fuller exposition of Christ's redeeming power, and make men feel at once the liberty and holy binding they have in Him. We are messengers of Christ to the souls of men, and even when speaking on the topics of the day—our duties, responsibilities, dangers, our fears, hopes, joy; our sermons must come from the Cross of Christ, and lead to the Cross again.

We bring Christ near as a *present Saviour;* "Lo, I am with you always." "Wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We are not explaining a history, but preaching a Saviour who lives in the Gospels, and pours the fullness of his redemption into them. A Saviour not in some far away, unknown place, but the Shepherd, still seeking the lost sheep in the wilderness, as compassionate and loving as ever, and declaring that the men of our day are as dear to him as any of those who were his cotemporaries. We hold up the same Jesus that took the little children in his arms, and talked with the woman at the well; that saw the sorrow of the poor widow; around whom the helpless and the despairing crowded; whose feelings often mastered him as he yearned for the salvation of the people,—the man Christ Jesus, who pleaded and wept. We preach Jesus as Saviour, physician, shepherd, guide, friend and bro-

ther, giving such a conception of Him as shall draw the people to the foot of the Cross.

VI.—Adaptation to the times in which we live is one great need of our modern Pulpit.

We have heard learned sermons, able dissertations, beautiful word-painting, highly-finished literary productions, flights of oratory; but there was no special relation to the immediate wants and circumstances of the people. Our teaching is often not on the plane of daily life, and therefore fails to touch the actual feelings and experiences of those who wait on our ministry. How seldom do busy, struggling, burdened, tempted men and women get that help and sympathy from our preaching that they are entitled to, because the minister is ignorant of their condition. He is a scholar, a book-worm, a recluse. He knows *subjects*, but not *people*. He has studied the moral condition of Greece and Rome in classic days, but does not know what the men and women of his own congregation are thinking about. He is quite familiar with all the minutiæ of Cataline's base conspiraey, but knows nothing of the moral condition of his own parish. Surely the great aim of the pulpit is to bring the truths that were written eighteen hundred years ago into the plane of our present life, and make them fit into the actual condition of the heart. While the truth itself is unchanging, and is fit for man's present need, as the sun-light to his eyes or the air to his lungs, yet the *way* of bringing that truth to bear on the present needs of the age, must vary with the age itself. The feeling of our hearers often is, "Granted the truth of all you say: *cui bono*—who is profited?" The preacher seems to be out of relation to surrounding circumstances; some ancient inscription for modern eyes to decipher,—a relic from the old-world life, projected, like Cleopatra's needle, into the midst of this busy, bustling, earnest, practical nineteenth century. We need a pulpit that will recognize things as they really are, and which will suit itself to the men and women who live now, and whose duties and responsibilities arise out of these precious days that are

now passing over our heads. It is certainly more to our present purpose to know what we ought to do to-day, than to discuss what they did in Greece and Rome centuries ago. How often do you hear sermons that seem a thousand miles away from the every-day life of the people! Sermons that never turn the rich, warm tints of the Gospel into the channels through which modern life is flowing. With such men the pulpit is a fossil, and the people come to study antiquarian relics. But when we commend ourselves to every man's conscience, our hearers feel that all we say is in full harmony with the actual condition of things, as experience interprets them, and not out of joint with the whole frame-work of life.

We sometimes preach eloquently and loudly to men who never hear us! The sermon is for *absentees*. Some idea has taken hold of our mind and we must air it. We have read a heretical book, and think it must be pulled in pieces before our people, and the hour is spent in knocking down forms of unbelief, of which they have never heard till now, and thus the minister is the first to import heresy among the people. We castigate Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, or Spencer, but none of these gentlemen are there to hear us and be benefitted. It is better to speak the wholesome words of Jesus Christ to the men and women who are actually before us; to keep close to the positive teaching of the word; to instil truth into the heart; and this will kill heresy at the very root.

There is also a great deal of time and force spent in fighting extinct Satans—"*dead devils*," as Carlyle calls them. "And quite unconscious of the real, modern, man-devouring devil close at hand." A man will argue and preach against the great heresy of singing hymns, but never utter a word against the profane talk and licentious songs with which the mouths of the multitude are full. He will lecture and publish against the wickedness of using an organ, and call it the whoredom of Babylon, with twice the energy he uses against dishonesty, drunkenness, lying, and other immoralities, that cut at the very root of the Christian Church. Men will preach

for months at a time on the *Headship* of Christ, and forget He has a *heart*. Again, many seem to hit the wrong man in their preaching. A minister in the Highlands of Scotland preached every Sabbath upon the sin and danger of great riches, to a small congregation of poor shepherds, who were in far more danger from poverty. A German pastor was one day preaching to twelve hearers, and attempting to prove that it was not necessary for Christians to attend church. But as church-attendance was not a besetting sin, he might have saved his eloquence. I myself heard a minister preach to one of the meanest congregations on earth, and trying to show that people might give too much to the schemes of the Church.

All this is so much powder wasted. What a noble example of *adaptation* Paul was. He knew the doctrines he had to preach, and also the needs and spiritual condition of the people; and how wonderfully he suited the one to the other! Yea, how he varied his teaching so as to harmonize with the place and people! When writing to the great military power of the world, he speaks of the *power* of the Gospel, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," etc. When discussing with the cultured Grecian, he meets him on his level, and enlarges on the *æsthetic* aspects of nature and the beauties of the material creation. What a marvel of appropriateness was his sermon on Mars Hill, and how he insinuated the truth through the very prejudices and mental peculiarities of his audience; while no man ever showed more tact than Paul did when answering for himself before Agrippa. What a marvellous study his life was in this respect! Read 1 Cor. ix., 19—23.

Let this example of the Apostle both rebuke and inspire you as long as you are in the ministry. Don't think any denial or self-sacrifice too great, or any effort too exacting, if it will enable you to do your work more efficiently; for you go forth as ministers, not to please yourselves, but to do the will of him that sent you. The Preacher was commended because he sought out *acceptable words*. And the wise choice of our themes is as necessary in our day as ever. You must strive

to have a message adapted to the time, the place, and the people. And in the selecting of your themes nothing will guide you so well as a sanctified instinct, the result of thought, of sympathy with your people, an intimate knowledge of all their circumstances, and an earnest desire to benefit them. A tender and loving regard for your people, with a heart brooding over them till "Christ be formed in them the hope of glory," will enable you to select appropriate subjects, and keep your ministrations in living connection with the wants of the people. An appropriate text is in itself half a sermon, while many a service has been marred by some theme out of all keeping with the proprieties of the occasion.

VII.—This preaching will never lose its commanding influence among men.

There is a great deal of weak patronizing talk about "*The power of the pulpit;*" its waning influence as compared with the *press;* and the likelihood of its being superseded altogether. If it be affirmed that the influence of some pulpits is waning, nothing could be truer, and nothing more fortunate for the Church and society. But that the pulpit itself is superseded by the press or any other agency, is as foolish as to suppose we do not need food and clothes now, because a new pickle or salad has come into use; or that we do not need the sun now, because we have discovered and utilized petroleum.

The complaint against the pulpit is as old as the days of Paul. When the apostle preached the people grumbled,—"What will this babbler say; he seems to be a setter forth of strange gods"? Even the Lord of glory did not escape sharp criticisms and censures, nor did he preach so as to please; and you need not be surprised if you fall under the same condemnation. A surgeon cannot cut off a limb so as to make the operation a luxury to his patient; nor can ministers rebuke iniquity and all manner of wrong-doing, and be admired by the wrong-doers. Complaints against the truth are as old as sin, and men who do not like to retain God in their knowledge will continue to show the reprobate mind. But never

allow severe criticism to discourage you. Make it a stimulant to higher endeavours. We cannot on all occasions be fully furnished and preach eloquently. Sometimes our chariot-wheels will drag heavily, in spite of all we can do; but we must be ready always to do homage to the truth; and though the agent may be weak, the instrument is mighty.

Let the pulpit discharge its functions, and the country will continue to flourish by the preaching of the Gospel. Let its great themes be *sin* and *grace*; man's *fall*, and God's method of recovery. Let it show that the sinner and the Saviour have personal dealings with each other, and our modern pulpit need fear no rival. Use the same weapons that Paul, Peter, and John used; for the truth will suit our times as it has suited all times, when that truth is wisely applied to the ever changing aspects of society. It is only when the pulpit ceases to be practical that it ceases to be heeded. Too many sermons are like fire-crackers, let off for the sake of the noise, or a rocket thrown up into the air for its momentary flash and brilliancy of colouring. Such ministrations will soon be crowded out, and lose their influence; and the sooner the better.

Paul gloried in the Cross, and we have seen many proofs of its triumphs since his day. And that Cross has lost none of its spiritual power over the hearts and lives of men. Our glory to-day must still be in the Cross, for as long as the ages run, it will never cease to be the rallying centre of hope to the Church of God. The pulpit is the back-band of the Christian ministry, and instead of waning, the days of the pulpit's power are yet to come. There are many things on the earth to-day that must cease, that must be shaken; but some things cannot be shaken, and shall remain. And there is nothing which has such a future opening-up before it, as the preaching of the Gospel! The history of the past is full of disappointment to the sons of ambition. Thousands have engaged in schemes that mocked them; their fame burst like a bubble; their sun went down while it was yet day. Where is all

the glory, and renown, and chivalry of ancient Greece and Rome? Where is all the pomp and grandeur of the Pharaohs, or the victories of the first Napoleon? All has vanished like a dream. But rest assured that your labour in the Lord will not be in vain. A cup of cold water given will not lose its reward. The work of the Church is just beginning, and the light that is gathering around her movements will soon fill the whole horizon of vision, as the morning broadens into the perfect day. The story of Calvary must live in the freshness of its Divine power through the generations. As the Alpine peak amid the surrounding hills, bathed in the eternal sunshine of heaven, so is Christ crucified amid all other subjects of thought and pursuit among men. The grand truths which you preach will never wear out, for the streams of their blessing flow from a fountain in the heart of God.

There are some things of which men never grow weary; things upon which our souls continue to feast. Who grows weary of the glories of a summer morning? and the sunlight is as sweet to-day as when it first shone in Paradise over the loveliness of that unblighted Eden. It is as pleasant to-day for our eyes to behold the sun, as in the days of Job! Who ever tires of the Spring blossoms, the song of the birds, the fleecy fullness of the Summer clouds? Youthful love is as tender, parental sorrow as crushing, as on the first day they were experienced. So the great truths proclaimed from the Christian pulpit shall remain a perpetual fountain of endless power and blessedness as long as the course of ages run. Christ did not return to heaven baffled, and beaten, and empty, but laden with the spoils of victory, and he must reign till he has made all his enemies his footstool. So, then, you are not engaged in a lost cause, when you are on the side of Jehovah-Jesus, and working for him. Only show yourselves workmen not needing to be ashamed, and your work will prove its own power, as every flower that blooms is a proof of its own beauty.

VIII.—Your grand aim in preaching the Cross.

"To present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," that he be filled with all the fullness of God. One of the great heresies of the age, is, preaching for the sake of the sermon, and not for the sake of the lives of those who come to hear us. We think of our sermons as works of art, things to be admired for their own sake, and not for the sake of the work they accomplish in the lives of men.

The Ministry is God's ordinance for a specific purpose, and it is a legitimate question, Is it fulfilling its purpose? Does the pulpit exercise that commanding influence it was designed to have over the conscience and the life? Is it gathering in the fruits we might naturally expect from so much preaching? We must learn to come down from our scholastic heights, and touch the actual difficulties and trials of struggling men and women. We must take them by the hand, and lead them on to the fuller privileges of the Sons of God. Come up close to your hearers, and press the truth home to the conscience. Have a specific aim in each discourse, and strive to attain it. Sermons are often preached, so obscure, unpractical, so remote from life and its many burdens, so unnatural, as if they had been written and preached under the fear that some of the hearers might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and be converted.

You must take the truth, and touch the human soul with it. That soul is a wonderful instrument; and you must try to touch every key, and manage every stop; and thus bring out spiritual music, sweet, rich, sad, solemn, cheerful, by the help of the Spirit of God. Don't prepare elaborate Essays that are inapplicable to the burdens of your people, so as not even to recognize the fact of their presence. Don't prepare sermons for the press, but for the understanding and hearts of men. It is very easy, but a vulgar thing, to display our scholastic attainments, like the packman his trinkets. But to lay

hold of the heart and move it, to stir the conscience, to bring the judgment and decision over to the side of God, must be your constant aim. Never let your sermon be an *end*, but only a *means* to an end in the *edification of the Church of God*. Aimless sermons are the curse of the day. Men occupying the pulpit, and preaching without any sympathy with the spiritual condition of their hearers, more absorbed in their own speculations and modes of thought, than for the experience and spiritual strength, the joy and righteousness of the people; more concerned for their style and grace of diction, than in the salvation of immortal souls.

Dwell long and richly on the great themes of the Gospel; conceal no vital doctrine; slight none; give each its place, and prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Don't be afraid to preach about God's sovereign election, or any of the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism; all these have an important bearing on man's edification and growth in grace. Gospel truth is the life-blood of piety. To teach men the truth of God, and quicken what they already know into freshness and life, is the great means of doing good. But every preacher must look beyond [illegible]e knowledge, to the character which that knowledge is to form. He must strive to make his people know the truth, and also to feel its gracious power. Every sermon, like the stroke of a brush in a painter's hand, must bring out some feature of the likeness of Christ. All truth, all sermons, are only instruments as the hammer in the sculptor's hand, gradually to shape us into the perfect symmetry of manhood in Christ Jesus. Sermons are as tools in the architect's hands, in the building up of the temple of God within us,—a house that is eternal in the heavens. We preach for the sake of the hearts and lives of those who hear us, and therefore the work done is that which alone measures the value of a sermon. In our preaching we strive to broaden men's knowledge, and gain direct power over their hearts.

IX.—Put your strength into this great and blessed work.

Let the zeal of our Father's house consume you. Whatever other churches may be inclined to do, our church must follow the same policy in the future which she has so nobly endeavoured to do in the past, and put her main strength into her pulpits. If a Presbyterian minister is weak in the pulpit, he is weak all over. The pulpit should be the minister's home and throne, where he feels that he dwells at ease, and sits firmly on his seat. Victory is his when the minister takes naturally and lovingly to the order and work of preparing himself each week to come forth as a strong man to run a race; his quiver full of arrows, and able to shoot so as to hit the mark.

The ministry being taken into partnership with the Holy Spirit himself, in the great work of reclaiming and restoring lost man to the home and likeness of our Father, the office must demand from us the richest service we can yield. The work is the most transcendent ever committed to any agency, and therefore, like Paul, we may well say, "*I magnify my office.*" Paul would not have exchanged his pulpit for Cæsar's Throne, and all the honours of the Imperial City. The reason why so many ministers do not rest comfortably in their work, is, because they do not magnify their office; and the same will prove true of every worker in life's busy scenes. No department of this world's labour will ever receive the strength and loyalty of a man's heart, till he puts his whole manhood into it, and consecrates his highest efforts to his calling.

If there is a work on earth in which a man can feel miserable, it must be in the ministry when there is no inward satisfaction, or felt reliance, on that Saviour whom he professes to preach; when there is a conscious incongruity between the habitual bent of his mind, and those responsible duties which his office leads him to discharge. There is nothing that steals the heart and takes away all nobility of feeling more rapidly,

than this. Want of heart in the work of the ministry dries the juices of the soul, quenching the holy fire, till nothing is left but the cold cinders and gray ashes of hypocrisy. There can be no lower form of human misery than an unconsecrated priesthood. Hence the many cautions that are given to those who are assuming the work of the Christian ministry. Gather all your resources, mental and spiritual; baptize them with the tenderest affections of your heart, and pour them all out in preaching the everlasting Gospel. Focus yourself on the pulpit, and make it supreme. When a minister shirks his great work, and endeavours to make up for his mental flabbiness by incessant running about to all Conventions, Conferences, Committees, Soirees, or even among the families of his people, he may get the name of being a very busy man, or "*a dear, good man.*" He may be called a number of endearing epithets, but it does not follow that he is an able minister of the New Testament. He is in great danger of losing himself in petty details; and as one has said, be "A man of hop, skip and jump, to be varied only by jump, hop and skip." And when he has done that, you seem to be at the bottom of him. Too many in this way excuse themselves from the necessity of this severe mental toil, which exhausts the energies and leaves us sometimes like a sucked orange. It is easy to drift from our moorings and float with the current; to become a gossip at the street corners, or a close attender at Conventions. It is easy, and too common, to mistake the fussiness of the flesh, for the zeal of the Spirit. But they are the elect who have such a love for the great work of preaching as to make them willing to yield the best offerings of their brain and heart. Few are ready to offer *themselves* on the altar in devotion to duty.

Some congregations make foolish, unkind, cruel demands upon their minister, and insist that he should be an illustration of perpetual motion; and many a young man, full of zeal, yields to these demands in the morning of his work, and passes the day of his ministerial labours in wasting his energies.

In the name of that ministry in which the Church's glory rests, permit me to say in all sober earnestness, OUR PEOPLE EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM US. A minister has to write as much as a lawyer in ordinary practice; visit as much as a doctor; give as much attendance at Church Courts as a member of Parliament; and, in addition, preach eloquent sermons every Sabbath. He must visit incessantly, and also be a modern Demosthenes; while in every household his lips must drop with honeyed wisdom. Moreover, he must give lectures occasionally, and these must be *rare treats to those who had the good fortune to be present*. He has to attend meetings, reasonable and unreasonable; be present at Soirees, Socials, Re-unions, etc., etc., and live in the community as if at College he had got wound up, and now, like a clock, could go on ticking for twenty, thirty, or forty years, without any trouble. The minister must be always on the move among his people, at every sick-bed, without notice; always in the homes of his people, and always in his own home to receive callers; at every public meeting, to deliver a brilliant speech; and have plenty of time to study and preach brilliant sermons and give eloquent lectures, brimful of genius; in fact, running over with originality and sanctified power,—Salary, $600, the congregation raising $400, and the Home Mission giving $200!!

But all these modern inventions, these thousand-and-one meetings, and all this shallow, parrot talk at Conventions and Sabbath-School Parliaments, are sad substitutes for the grand, rugged, old-fashioned way of preaching the everlasting Gospel of the grace of God. "*Preach the Word*" — let it ring in your ear day and night, and lie close upon your heart. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." It must be a preaching of the *Cross*. The life is in the blood. Preach Christ as the great atonement; glory in the Cross. It runs through all our religious, social, and political life. It permeates all conditions of society, from the base to the roof-tree! "The coronation of royalty is ratified by it; the Judge takes his oath of office amid its sanctities. Its memorials cluster around our cathedral temples and humble village churches; the great

message there proclaimed is a message from the Cross. Our beloved dead are laid in the silent grave with the words of Jesus and the resurrection in our hearts." The Cross reminds us of God's dealings with guilty men, and of that sacrifice offered up once for all. It is the substance of all our songs of praise. When we think of the Cross, we think of Jesus, our eternal Saviour, of the Rock cleft for us. The Cross reminds us of his infinite purity and infinite tenderness; of the chords of his love and the pouring out of his soul. It is, in short, the synonym of "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. The Cross is the very power of God. The myriads of the redeemed before the throne on high are witnesses to, and proofs of its saving power; while the tens of thousands on earth, saved from sin, clothed and in their right mind, are a living testimony that the Cross has been the power of God to them. The very leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

This essential truth has been misunderstood and misrepresented. As being the very citadel of the Gospel fortress, where all the armoury of her spiritual conquests are kept, the legions of unbelief have beleaguered and assaulted it for many a day. Ridicule has shot her envenomed shafts at it. Philosophy, falsely so called, has sought to undermine it; heresy has poured her vials of wrath upon it; but still it remains as true and precious as ever. The Apostles preached it, wrote it, reasoned it, exulted in it, put it into their ascriptions of praise; it was the very fire and ecstasy of their Apostleship. And the last voices we hear, as the sublime strain of Revelation ends, and the Apocalyptic vision of ages sweeps away before us, are the voices of the redeemed multitudes in songs of triumph before the Throne, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," etc. "*It behoved Christ to suffer.*" This is the centre truth of Christianity, against which the waves of unbelief have long been chafing, only to wash away the detritus which error has built around it, to reveal the truth so precious to every child of God.

Christ giving himself a ransom for many, becomes the inmost and grandest power of the Gospel; it is its peculiar characteristic and crowning glory. In the light of the Cross the law becomes more sacred, truth more venerable, love more heavenly, and salvation more precious.

Christ crucified changes the very scenes and songs of heaven, and establishes a new form of worship, and inspires a new anthem of adoration, and diffuses a new joy through the shining ranks, and bathes the city in a sunshine which even heaven had never known, had it not been for the Cross which we preach. This is the worship of the Lamb that was slain, and the song of praise unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

It is this truth—the substitution of the righteous for the guilty—that hangs a new glory around the Throne of the Almighty, and brings out into bolder relief the deepening glory of that heavenly country; and throws a new effulgence over yon celestial scenery, as the sun obscures the stars by spreading over them the glorious garments that clothe morning, when she steps forth from her pillar of cloud.

Let us then, as the ministers of Jesus Christ, gird ourselves for this great argument, and lay our best sacrifices on this altar. Pray that the Priests may be clothed with salvation, that the saints of God may shout for joy.

The realities of the Gospel with which you are charged are at once grand and solemn—Man's *fall*, and redemption through God's purpose of grace; his depravity of heart, and the Spirit's cleansing power through the blood of Jesus; the wages of sin, and the gift of God; the awful judgments and sweet promises; heaven and hell; everlasting shame and contempt, and endless blessedness amid the glories of God's love. With such a message, who need be weak in the pulpit? For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Don't conceal its edge in flowery oratory.

Let it find an entrance, for "it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And when the truth comes home to the conscience, it becomes the power of God unto salvation. What work on earth so well deserves the offering of *ourselves* on the altar, as this work of the Christian Ministry? To study God's Word through and through, and hold its sacred truths in solution in your heart; to have a grasp of Christian doctrine in all its relations; and then to study the human soul that needs its saving grace, is not a thing that comes by accident. It must be through the baptism of the Spirit, consecrating you to the blessed work of the Christian ministry.

As one has said, when Paul was leaving Ephesus, where he had laboured three years, he did not feel confident that he was free from the blood of all men because he had kept the pulpit regularly supplied, had attended all the prayer meetings, had done all that his congregation expected of him; and that they in turn had paid his salary regularly, and in advance in quarterly payments; and had honoured him with several donation parties. "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia," etc., etc.—Acts xx. 18—21. Such a spirit, and such labour, will be powerful anywhere and always, and will never lose its commanding influence amid the busiest scenes of human life. To men who sit in darkness, might not such a presentation of God be made them, as the breaking of the morning after a long night of trouble! Might it not be as the coming in of Spring, when the icy indifference melts away amid golden sunshine, and song of birds, and May blossoms! Might not the Gospel be made a spiritual ozone, a breath of mountain air, pure and inspiring to thousands who are stifling in the hot-beds of iniquity!

How solemn to stand before our congregations in all the variety of their life! It is a subduing sight! What an overpowering sense of their manifold wants! So many concealed burdens; so many doubts and fears; so many hidden sorrows; there are so many perils on every hand; so many

sad, sad histories, that love seeks to cover over; so many wrecks cast up amid the surf of society! What can we do in the face of all this evil? We point our people to the "*Rock of Ages*" cleft for them; and at no time does Jesus seem more precious, so crowned with glory and honour, as when we are permitted to preach his unsearchable riches, and commit our people to his holy keeping.